

Downtown Heritage Perth BIA

Making Community Events Work For Your Business

People from all around Ontario associate historic Downtown Heritage Perth as the place where the community gathers to celebrate. This includes activities like the Night Markets, Weekends in Perth and the Stewart Park Festival, as well as other events like Garlic Festival, Festival of the Maples, the Perth Kilt Run and the Festival of Good Cheer. These events that bring THOUSANDS of people to Downtown Heritage Perth are your opportunity to introduce your business to new customers and to share your love for our community with your existing customers.

As a business owner, you have an important stake in promoting Downtown Heritage Perth. Through community events, there are opportunities for increased exposure to a diverse and broad market. It can be challenging, however, for businesses owners to make the most out of these community events, which can often draw potential customers away from their storefronts or can compete for their attention, particularly when it comes to their dining choices. So the big question is **why do we have special events Downtown?**

- First, special events bring thousands of people to Downtown Heritage Perth. With so many visitors here, the opportunity for Downtown merchants to generate extra income is greatly increased. This can be a day-of-event benefit.
- Second, special events allow visitors to see all that Downtown Heritage Perth has to offer. While not everyone who attends an event will be shopping, certainly they will all be looking – looking at what stores, restaurants and services are here. If they have an enjoyable time during the event, they are much more likely to return at a later date to make purchases. This is an after-event benefit.
- Third, successful events get people thinking about Downtown Heritage Perth as a destination for shopping, food and entertainment, rather than, as a place to pass through to simply get somewhere else. This is a long-term benefit.

The following ideas will give you helpful information on how you might be able to unlock ways to increase revenue during these events and will provide you with tools you can use to attract people and bring them into your store – before, during, and after the event.

PRE-EVENT TIPS

“Plant the Seed.”

Find out the theme and mission of upcoming events, then look for ways to either tie that to your products and service or decorate to match the theme. A few weeks before the event, put some items near your cash register or in your window that fit the theme of the upcoming event. The point is to raise awareness of the event and to allow you to tell your customers about the specials you will be offering during the event.

Print and distribute flyers.

Advertise some special buys in your store during the event. Beginning a few weeks before the event, put the fliers in your customers' shopping bags so they know about the event and what will be going on in your store.

Work your contact list.

If you have an email list of your customers, send them an email and let them know about the event, your business hours during the event, and what you will be offering. If you have a mailing list, consider sending a flier along with a coupon that is good only during the event. Staying in contact with your customers makes them feel valued and it keeps your business in their mind.

Prepare coupons for event attendees.

If you are able to have discounts on your items or services, create coupons and hand them out during the event. These could be coupons that could be used during the event or at a later time to encourage them to return to the downtown and shop. The important thing is to let people know that your business is open for business. Remember that offering discounts and coupons are not for everyone and there can be downsides to this marketing approach. Check out the advice by Investopedia.com on the [Pros and Cons of Coupons](#).

Promote the event on social media.

Take local marketing to the next level with social media. Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok and Instagram are great platforms to build interest. Visit the event page on Facebook or Instagram to find popular hashtags. Hashtags are short words or phrases that identify trending topics. By using event hashtags, you can draw attention from anyone following the event. Imagine the impact when an event has thousands of followers.

For **restaurants**, think about promoting early reservations for lunch and dinner during the event. Consider running promotions leading up to the event, which can work on any social media platform you choose. Offer a discount or small giveaway for sharing your tweets, photos, videos, and other content. At the same time, give people a reason to stop by your store during the event. After all, the point of building awareness is to boost sales.

Be a Sponsor.

Your business can support the market or event and in return be promoted at a variety of levels as seen in the sponsorship materials. Some packages even include promotional booth space.

For example, you can see different ways to become a sponsor for the Stewart Park Festival by visiting the Become a Sponsor page on their website: [Become A Sponsor – Stewart Park Festival](#)

DATE-OF-EVENT TIPS

Make sure your business remains open during the event.

You can't make a sale if you aren't open. While special event attendees may not be your "regular" customers, they are your "potential" customers. Show them that you are supportive of the Downtown and that the Downtown is a great place to be. Bring information regarding your business to the event information booth before the event so they can refer people your way.

Have a sidewalk sale table.

Attract attendees to your store. When possible, try to offer items that complement the special event. For example, a retail business might consider selling sunscreen, tanning lotion, flip-flops, sunglasses, or hats during the Stewart Park Festival. If your business doesn't carry these items, just moving some of your regular merchandise outside brings extra attention to your shop. Just remember to coordinate with the Town of Perth to ensure you are adhering to the applicable by-laws.

Have a special in-store sale or special only during the hours of the event.

Provide specials on select food or merchandise that will draw people into your business. While they're in your shop, consider running an easy contest. Have participants fill out a piece of paper with their guess, name, address, phone number, email and birth date (no year needed). By doing so, they've entered the contest and you've got important information that allows you to add them to your mailing list or to begin one.

Restaurants / Food Providers - “Take-Away” or “Grab-and-Go” Menu

Food providers can offer a ‘take-away menu’ or special ‘grab-and-go’ items that can be promoted by the event staff on the event site. These items can be ordered using your in-house apps, online ordering forms or by phone call - whatever works best for your business, just remember to provide all of this info to the event staff so they can share it with their attendees.

Offer to hold customers’ purchases for them.

Some people resist making purchases during special events because they don’t want to carry additional items. Holding packages is an easy way to help close a sale and to provide great customer service that will long be remembered.

Have an open house or in-store demonstration during the event.

This is a great way for service-related businesses to introduce themselves and their services to the public. Have a brief sign-in form to capture the name and email address of everyone who attended so you can follow up with them after the event. Also, be sure to pass out fliers or business cards to all who attend. Create a fun atmosphere in your store by creating activity. Event patrons are more likely to visit a busy store.

Build your mailing list.

Following up with customers is the key to getting repeat business and referrals. Take every opportunity to get names and contact information from event attendees. Building a mailing list allows you to communicate directly and inexpensively throughout the year with your customers. Encourage customers to enter a drawing for a door prize. Once customers have filled out the entry card, you can use the information to send out promotional mailings.

Volunteer with your business team.

All the community events utilize community members to support the events, and this is an especially great way for non-retail businesses to get their name out there during events.

AFTER EVENT TIPS

Follow-up with those that came in.

If you collected names and contact information from people who visited your business

during the event, reach out to them. Even if they didn't purchase anything during the event, sometimes a follow up is all that is needed to make a sale or close a deal.

Stay in contact.

In today's world, that's easy and inexpensive. One of the simplest and most effective ways to stay fresh in the minds of your customers is to send them regular electronic newsletters. There are many programs available online, such as Canva and MailChimp. There you will find a wide range of easy-to-use templates for creating your own newsletters. Use them to tell your customers what is new in your business. Let them know of other upcoming Downtown events. Conduct a survey to find out what your customers are looking for. The possibilities are endless. Between newsletters, maintain contact and inform customers about sales and specials through email and snail mail.

Be part of planning other events.

Downtown special events don't happen by themselves. They take months of planning and organizing by volunteers and merchants just like you. If you are part of the planning, you have direct input on how events can be structured to better meet the needs of Downtown business owners. If you are interested in joining an event committee, please the BIA Coordinator (bia@perth.ca).

You can also see all of the events and festivals happening in Perth and area on the Town website:

[Festivals and Events - Town of Perth](#)

Events are also a great opportunity to create cross promotions with your neighboring businesses, maybe a passport or scavenger hunt. The BIA offers a Collaborative Event and Marketing Grant that you can apply for ahead of time and receive money and support from the Perth BIA.

[CEM Marketing Grant - Downtown Heritage Perth BIA \(\[downtownperthbia.ca\]\(http://downtownperthbia.ca\)\)](#)

Experiment and learn.

Not every promotional idea will work for every business every time. Local marketing takes practice. Try different things. Keep what works. Get rid of what doesn't. Come up with new ideas.

Collaborating with other businesses, speaking with organizations like Valley Heartland, the Small Business Advisory Centre, the DHPBIA Promotions Committee or even getting consultations from some of the great local agencies that specialize in brand marketing, are great ways to unlock the potential of these major events in Perth.

No matter what you plan to do to make your business work as part of an event, be sure to have fun, friendly staff working as part of your team, as good energy goes a long way. Most importantly, focus on what makes your products special. When you have something unique to offer, you'll have no trouble coming up with great marketing ideas for your small business.